United Nations S/2018/427

Security Council

Distr.: General
8 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 4 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith an information bulletin dated 4 May 2018 from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 4 May from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (4 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire: four in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported four incidents of gunfire: three in Idlib Governorate and one in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Murjanah, Rif Dimashq Governorate: 1.9 tons of food and essential items were delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,800 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,549.06 tons.

Five United Nations humanitarian convoys were assured passage to:

1. Jizah in Dar'a Governorate (total cargo weight 45 tons);
2. Dar'a Governorate (total cargo weight 26 tons);
3. Dar'a Governorate (104 tons).

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 27 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 79,533 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,509.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

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7 May 2018

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Letter dated 4 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing to inform that on Wednesday, 2 May 2018, the Houthi militias launched two Katyusha missiles towards the headquarters of the Centre for Rehabilitation of Children in Yemen, funded and operated by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief). One of the Katyusha missiles hit the Centre itself, causing substantial damage to the building and spreading panic among the residents of the neighbourhood and the inhabitants of the Centre — children who were recruited by the Houthis to participate in combat activities and who were being rehabilitated so that they could be reintegrated into their families and into society at large. This has been the third such Houthi attack on the Centre in the past 30 days, as it was also attacked on Monday, 30 April, and Wednesday, 4 April, despite it being located in a residential area with no legitimate military targets in its vicinity. KSRelief has evacuated the children to a safer location.

The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen condemns in the strongest terms this cowardly and despicable terrorist Houthi attack on a children's rehabilitation centre. With such attacks, the Houthi militias redouble the victimization of Yemeni children whom they have forcibly recruited into their militia. Firstly, they compelled many of their child soldiers to undertake extremely dangerous missions, such as planting thousands of mines along the Saudi-Yemeni border — and then they attack the rehabilitation centre working to give these victimized children a second chance at a normal life despite all of the trauma they have endured at the hands of the Houthis. The Coalition has taken great strides in its efforts to improve its child protection capabilities, inter alia by arranging technical visits for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and working to implement their policy recommendations. The Coalition notes with great regret that at the same time it has undertaken these efforts, the Houthis have scaled up their violations of international law and international humanitarian law, especially in regard to the protected status of children and civilian objects. The Coalition expresses its outrage at the continued Houthi practice of child soldier recruitment and demands that it be ended immediately and that all children in Houthi custody be released, to allow them to undergo rehabilitation treatment before reuniting with their families and reintegrating into their communities.

The Coalition calls upon the Security Council and the international community to condemn these heinous Houthi terrorist attacks. Furthermore, the Coalition calls on the Council to strengthen the implementation of the arms embargo established pursuant to Council resolution 2216 (2015), to hold the violators of the arms embargo

accountable, especially Iran, and to address the stockpile of illicit weapons that the Houthis have illegally amassed. These measures are necessary to ensure that such despicable Houthi attacks on children will never recur.

Finally, my delegation requests that the present letter be circulated as a document of the Security Council, and informs that a copy will be forwarded to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/429

Security Council

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United Nations Support Mission in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2376 (2017), covers political and security developments in Libya, provides an overview of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the country and outlines the activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) since the issuance of my previous report on 12 February 2018 (S/2018/140).

II. Political and security-related developments

2. My Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, continued his efforts under the United Nations action plan to support an inclusive political process to conclude the country's prolonged transition. Consultations continued between representatives of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State on forming a new executive authority to reach an agreement on limited amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement. In parallel, a series of meetings were held throughout the country to build momentum towards the national conference by encouraging dialogue and broad participation in the political process. The process is aimed at responding to the interest of Libyans in taking part in the political process and at providing a basis for solid participation in future electoral processes and acceptance of election results. Progress towards holding national parliamentary and presidential elections was made through the conclusion of the voter registration update, within Libya and abroad.

3. To support the political process, the United Nations continued to work with various communities to peacefully resolve the roots of their grievances through local reconciliation. These initiatives contributed to renewing contacts and reaching reconciliation agreements in southern and western Libya. Significantly, representatives of Misratah and Zintan progressed towards reconciliation, agreeing at the end of March on the need for a comprehensive national reconciliation and the peaceful transfer of power in Libya. They committed to working towards the unification of military and security institutions. With preparations proceeding for holding municipal elections during the course of 2018, mayors and heads of local councils representing all parts of the country convened for the second time since the start of the year. They urged the leadership of the House of Representatives and of the High Council of State to agree on establishing a new Government.

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4. The overall security environment remained poor. Southern Libya witnessed an escalation of tensions in early March between militias from communities in conflict. Intermittent fighting in and around the city of Sabha continued to result in civilian casualties and the displacement of thousands of civilians. In Tripoli and its environs, a string of high-profile kidnappings occurred. Deadly bombing attacks on security checkpoints, including some for which the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility, took place in central and eastern Libya.

Implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement

5. During the period under review, there was an increase in engagement between members of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State to agree on a potential mechanism for electing a new executive authority. In mid-February, 54 members of the High Council of State issued a statement calling on the House of Representatives to move forward on the process that had begun in September 2017. In response, in late March, 49 members of the House of Representatives called for closer collaboration between the two assemblies to agree on a new Presidency Council. Discussions started on a joint meeting between these substantial constituencies from both houses. Following an internal run-off election on 8 April, Khaled al-Meshri succeeded Abdulrahman al-Sweihli as the President of the High Council of State.

6. Progress was achieved on technical preparations for the holding of elections in 2018. The process for updating voter registration, which was launched on 6 December 2017 and concluded at the end of March 2018, resulted in the addition of about 1 million new registrants.

International and regional engagement

7. International and regional engagement continued to play a vital role in support of United Nations efforts to address the crisis in Libya. The African Union, the European Union and the United Nations task force continued efforts to address the issue of migration. The tripartite task force held several political and technical meetings during the reporting period. It undertook a joint assessment mission to Libya on 21 February to review progress in achieving the voluntary return of migrants and the evacuation of refugees and asylum seekers out of Libya. It also conducted a mission to Tripoli on 22 February, during which it visited a detention facility and met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and other authorities. The task force encouraged the Government to close down the detention facilities and to improve the process for repatriation, including by ending the need for exit visas. It also created an operational cell in Tunis, which continued to meet regularly. Discussions are ongoing on the possibility of extending the mandate of the task force, which expires in May 2018.

8. Notable achievements of the task force include the return of 11,859 migrants to 29 countries of origin between 28 November 2017 and 14 April 2018, through the Voluntary Humanitarian Returns programme of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the support of the African Union, the European Union and the Government of Libya.

9. On 15 March, UNSMIL and IOM participated in the sixth ministerial coordination platform on Sahel strategies, hosted by the Government of Chad in N'Djamena. The forum discussed the impact of the situation in Libya on the situation in the Sahel for the first time. On 3 April in Niamey, Chad, Libya, the Niger and the Sudan agreed to establish a mechanism of cooperation in the areas of border security and the fight against transnational organized crime.

10. My Special Representative attended the meeting of the Ad Hoc High-Level Committee on Libya in Addis Ababa held on 17 April, which provided an opportunity

to renew the African Union-United Nations partnership on issues concerning Libya. In addition, on 30 April the Quartet on Libya convened its fifth meeting at the League of Arab States headquarters in Cairo. The four organizations of the Quartet — the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States and the United Nations — discussed the situation in the country and renewed their support for the United Nations action plan.

Situation in the western region

11. The security situation in the western region remained precarious during the reporting period, with bouts of localized low-level conflict between rival armed groups. On 21 February, members of the Special Deterrence Force militia raided the Sahara Bank in Warshafanah with the aim of allegedly arresting criminal gang members. During the course of the raid, indiscriminate fire by the Force led to the killing of the group's commander and at least four civilian casualties. Clashes between the Force and the armed group continued in the area for two days, which caused a portion of the coastal road into Warshafanah to be blocked for a limited period. The coastal road connecting Warshafanah to the centre of the capital, and the area close to Tripoli International Airport, is now secured by the special operations forces, which are under the control of the Presidency Council's commander of the western military region. On 2 May, ISIL claimed responsibility for an attack on the High Commission for National Elections in Tripoli, in which more than 15 people were killed.

12. There were continued reports of theft, carjackings, attacks and kidnappings during the reporting period. Several high-profile kidnappings occurred. On 14 March, the convoy of the President of the High Council of State was attacked in the Qawalish district while en route from Gharyan to Yafran; two members of the convoy were injured. UNSMIL condemned the attack, rejecting the use of violence to reach political objectives. On 15 March, the military prosecutor general, Brigadier General Masoud Erhuma, was seized by unknown armed groups in Tripoli. On 28 March, Central Tripoli Mayor Abdel-Raouf Beitalmal was kidnapped from the Old City of Tripoli by a brigade aligned with the Ministry of Interior, but was later released.

13. Small, contained popular protests also occurred during the reporting period. On 10 March, a demonstration took place at Tripoli's Algeria Square to demand an improvement in living conditions and accountability for officials accused of financial corruption. On 30 March, Referendum First, a consortium of non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations, formed the "30 March" movement and held demonstrations in Martyrs' Square in Tripoli, making political and economic demands.

Situation in the eastern region

14. In Darnah, the siege by the Libyan National Army continued, adversely affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance and access to adequate health care. Increased shelling and use of heavy artillery by the Libyan National Army was reported on several occasions in March, targeting the eastern parts of the city and injuring several civilians. On 4 March, two civilians were injured, reportedly from shelling by the Army. Subsequent Army activities and retaliatory attacks by the Darnah Mujahedeen Shura Council on 8, 11 and 19 March resulted in two people being killed and nine others injured from both sides. On numerous occasions, the Army publicly announced that it would launch a military offensive in Darnah, which had yet to materialize.

Situation in the southern region

15. During the period under review, intercommunal conflict increased in and around the city of Sabha between tribal armed groups and militias. The Libyan National Army moved military equipment into the area. On 6 March, after weeks of periodic clashes, violence escalated in Sabha between armed groups from the Tebu and the Awlad Sulayman communities. During the month of March, clashes resulted in seven persons being killed and more than 20 injured, most of whom were civilians. Approximately 720 families were displaced. By early April, more than 1,500 families in total had been displaced as a result of the fighting.

16. On 17 February, the Libyan National Army issued an ultimatum to foreign armed groups present in the Libyan territories to depart to their countries, threatening to resort to force by air and land. On 23 March, the Army deployed new forces and armoured vehicles to the Tamanhint airbase (approximately 30 km north of Sabha) and to the Birak al-Shati' airbase (100 km northwest of Sabha) to further enhance its presence in the region.

17. On 16 March, 16 suspected members of the Nusrah Front were arrested in Kufrah after having reportedly entered Libya from the Sudan. On 24 March, two individuals reportedly affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb were killed in Awbari city in a drone strike carried out by forces of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in coordination with the Government of National Accord.

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Libya

18. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continued activities around its former stronghold of Sirte, as well as in other areas of Libya. On 21 February, ISIL claimed responsibility for a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device which detonated at a Libyan National Army checkpoint on the road leading to the city of Jufrah. As a result, five Army members were killed and seven injured. Five suspected ISIL members were arrested on 3 March by the Special Deterrence Force in Qasr al-Qarahbulli and Zlitan. Subsequently, publicized statements suggested that ISIL sleeper cells existed in Tripoli and surrounding areas. On 9 March south of Ajdabiya, a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device targeted an Army checkpoint (gate 60), injuring three of its members. Similarly, on 29 March in Ajdabiya, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated at the eastern security gate manned by the Army, resulting in 6 of its members being killed and 10 others injured, including a civilian. In both incidents, media reports stated that ISIL had claimed responsibility.

19. On 2 April, anti-terrorism forces intercepted an ISIL convoy of six armed vehicles, reportedly seizing two of the vehicles while the other four escaped in an area between Zlitan and Bani Walid. On 2 April the Presidency Council launched a military operation against ISIL in the area stretching from Misratah in the east, Bani Walid in the south, Tarhunah and Msallata in the west, and Khums and Zlitan in the north.

Economic situation

20. During the reporting period, oil production was sustained at more than 1 million barrels per day, which in combination with higher international oil prices increased optimism about the country's economic outlook. Nonetheless, efforts to further increase oil production were hampered by insufficient financial resources for maintenance and investment in oil facilities and by blockades by armed militias and local communities. The El Feel oil field in the south-west remains closed, despite ongoing negotiations between representatives of the National Oil Corporation and

remnant forces of the Petroleum Facilities Guards over delays in salary payments, resulting in substantial financial losses.

21. Four months into the new fiscal year, Libyan authorities have still not agreed on the budget framework for 2018. Deliberations continue on raising total expenditures from the proposal of 42.5 billion Libyan dinars (about $31.8 billion), as compared with the 2017 budget proposal of 37.5 billion Libyan dinars (about $28 billion). Despite optimistic projections for oil revenues, the excessive public expenditures would generate a fiscal deficit of over 10 billion Libyan dinars (about $7.5 billion). The budget process stalled as a result of an outstanding agreement by the Central Bank of Libya to finance the fiscal deficit through withdrawals from foreign reserves and efforts to integrate the public expenditures of the "interim Government" in the East.

22. Following a sudden gain in value on the parallel market in January, the Libyan dinar depreciated to 6.25 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar as of 5 April, compared with the official exchange rate of about 1.39 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar. However, the value of the Libyan dinar on the black market stabilized at around 6.00–6.60 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar.

23. To overcome the liquidity crisis, Libyan women adopted coping strategies, such as selling jewellery, using savings and relying on social networks. However, women continued to face difficulties in sustaining and operating small and medium-sized enterprises, owing mainly to high production costs and reduced purchasing power.

24. The relative improvement in macroeconomic stability has been offset by emerging reports alleging rampant mismanagement of public funds. For instance, in reports of 13 March, the Office of the Attorney General charged that illegal fuel smuggling over the past three years had generated an estimated $750 million. Other reports indicated that corruption related to the issuing of letters of credit had contributed to the financing of armed militia groups.

III. Constitution-making process

25. Efforts to establish a constitutional framework for the end of the country's transitional period continued. On 14 February, the Supreme Court established a legal principle which will facilitate the end to litigation against the Constitution Drafting Assembly filed in administrative courts, thereby effectively removing the legal obstacles to a national referendum on the constiiutional proposal endorsed on 29 July 2017. Members of the House of Representatives started to discuss the legislation necessary for a referendum. The Constitution Drafting Assembly has since increased outreach activity on the constitutional proposal and engaged with other key Libyan institutions to promote the holding of a referendum ahead of parliamentary and presidential elections.

IV. Other activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya

A. Electoral support

26. UNSMIL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to provide advice and support to the High Commission for National Elections and other Libyan counterparts. Following the conduct of the voter registration update exercise by the High Commission, the total number of registered Libyans reached

2,434,654, of which 1,033,777 were women and 6,630 belonged to the out-of-country electorate.

27. Efforts have been focused on supporting the High Commission in enhancing its preparedness for future balloting events by providing advice and assistance in the areas of general management, data management, training and procedures, nomination of candidates and political entities, logistics and field operations, including backstopping support from headquarters. In addition, some technical assistance and support is also being provided to the Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections in its preparations for the 2018 local elections.

28. Three working groups, established in October 2017 by UNSMIL, led efforts to provide electoral assistance with a view to coordinating international support for voter registration, public outreach and electoral legislation. Further to a series of workshops held with international experts in January and February 2018, three sets of recommendations were developed in support of a referendum on a draft constitution, as well as a legal framework for presidential and parliamentary elections. The first two-day workshop was held beginning on 29 March with members of the legislative committee of the House of Representatives to promote discussions on referendum legislation.

29. In close consultation with the High Commission for National Elections and UNSMIL, the UNDP electoral assistance project entitled "Promoting elections for the people of Libya" finalized its workplan and started the implementation of its activities in Libya. The project received contributions of almost $10 million from the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

30. On 7 March, UNSMIL received a request from the Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections to provide support in the 2018 municipal council elections. In 2018, 75 of the 92 municipal councils that were elected in 2014 and 2015 will reach the end of their four-year-mandates. In the light of the municipal elections due to be held in Zawiya on 28 April, UNSMIL supported the Central Committee with outreach efforts during the reporting period and approved continued support through the development of a project on local elections, through UNDP, to be signed soon.

B. Human rights, transitional justice and the rule of law

31. During the period under review, all parties to the conflict committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

32. Ongoing fighting continued to claim civilian casualties. During the reporting period, UNSMIL documented a total of 43 civilian casualties: 16 deaths, including 3 children, and 27 persons injured, including 9 children. Leading causes of casualties among civilians included explosive remnants of war, gunfire, shelling and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

33. Civilians bore the brunt of intermittent clashes in southern Libya between the Awlad Sulayman and the Tebu tribal armed groups and their allies. The use of indiscriminate fire in densely populated areas led to civilian casualties, while snipers also apparently targeted civilians and civilian vehicles. Victims included civilians of Arab, Tebu and Tuareg origin. An estimated 1,500 families were displaced as a result of fighting, finding shelter in schools or with relatives and host communities in the towns of Awbari and Murzuq, as well as in Sabha neighbourhoods farther away from the conflict zones.

34. The Libyan National Army continued to impose restrictions on the freedom of movement of Darnah residents and on the entry into the city of certain prohibited goods, such as petrol, as well as humanitarian aid, such as medical supplies.

Abduction and unlawful deprivation of liberty

35. Armed groups on all sides continued to take hostages or to otherwise unlawfully deprive civilians, including children, of their liberty. Civilians were targeted for financial or political gain, on the basis of their tribal origin or family identity, or for their perceived political affiliations and opinions.

36. During the reporting period, Tripoli witnessed a rise in unlawful deprivations of liberty of government officials and other high-profile figures. The fate and whereabouts of the military prosecutor general, Masoud Erhouma, his driver and his security guard remain unknown following their disappearance from Tripoli on 15 March. On 17 March, unidentified gunmen in Tripoli took another member of the judiciary hostage. He was released three days later without charges or referral to judicial bodies.

37. On 20 March, Jumaa al-Usta, the former owner of the al-Assema television channel, which was closed down in 2014, together with three of his brothers, was taken from his home by armed men affiliated with the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade. While his brothers were released after a few hours, Jumaa al-Usta was detained until 26 March at a location controlled by the Brigade.

Detention and torture

38. Across the country, arbitrary detention and torture continued to be widespread in both prisons and detention facilities, with 6,400 individuals held in 26 official prisons under the Ministry of Justice, and an estimated 75 to 80 per cent of whom were being held in pretrial detention. Thousands of others were held in facilities nominally under the control of the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Defence, as well as facilities directly run by armed groups. Those held had little opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention or seek redress for violations suffered.

39. UNSMIL conducted eight visits to prisons and detention facilities in western Libya, including in Gharyan, Misratah, Tarhunah and Tripoli. Despite repeated requests, UNSMIL has not been able to visit the Mitiga detention facility, which is controlled by the Special Deterrence Force and where an estimated 2,600 people are allegedly held, most without charge or trial. On 28 February and 29 March, UNSMIL was not permitted to interview male and female detainees in private at a detention facility controlled by the Central Security/Abu Salim armed group.

40. In relation to detention facilities, UNSMIL continued to receive credible reports of prolonged and arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance, poor detention conditions, medical neglect and the denial of visits from families and lawyers. During the reporting period, UNSMIL gathered credible information on torture and other ill-treatment at a number of official prisons, including Ayn Zarah, Jawwiyah, Judaydah and Kuwayfiah prisons. Torture was also documented in detention facilities operated by the Special Deterrence Force, the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade, the Central Security/Abu Salim brigade, the Nawasi and Fursan Janzur armed groups in Tripoli and the central branch of the Criminal Investigations Department (previously known as the Department for Combating Crime) in Misratah.

41. In one notable example, the Special Deterrence Force continued to detain a married couple and their three children, aged between 2 and 5 years, who were seized from Zlitan on 3 February. The father appeared in a video recording posted on the

Facebook page of the Special Deterrence Force on 2 March "confessing" to having carried out terrorist acts.

42. In eastern Libya, UNSMIL documented that medical professionals, both women and men, over the age of 70 are among those held in the Gernada and Kuwayfiah prisons, or directly by armed groups allied to the Libyan National Army on account of their family links to the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council and their allies or their alleged lack of support for the Libyan National Army.

Groups in vulnerable situations

Migrants

43. Migrants, including children, continued to be vulnerable to unlawful deprivation of liberty and arbitrary detention in official and unofficial places of detention, torture, abduction for ransom, extortion, forced labour and unlawful killing. Perpetrators included State officials, armed groups, smugglers, traffickers and criminal gangs.

44. During the reporting period, UNSMIL visited three detention centres overseen by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration. Detained migrants were held in substandard conditions, characterized by overcrowding and poor lighting and ventilation. In some detention centres, detainees had no or limited access to sunlight and the outdoors, and were denied communication with their families. Detainees, including survivors of trafficking and rape, were exposed to further violations and were not provided with adequate access to legal aid, medical care, and mental health or psychosocial support.

45. On 14 March, the head of investigations in the Office of the General Prosecutor announced that 205 arrest warrants had been issued in relation to smuggling and abuse against migrants. No further details were made available.

Women and girls

46. Women and girls were arbitrarily detained, at times on the basis of their family affiliation or for "moral crimes," such as engaging in consensual sexual relations outside of wedlock. Many were held in facilities without female guards, heightening the risk of sexual abuse. Women were strip-searched by or in front of male guards and some were subjected to intrusive cavity searches. Migrant women and girls were particularly vulnerable to rape, forced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence at the hands of State officials, members of armed groups, smugglers and traffickers. The situation in the Judaydah Women's Prison deteriorated during the reporting period. During inspections of prisoner cells by the Special Deterrence Force, which has been in charge of securing the prison's perimeter since November 2017, Force members beat women, including with water pipes and the backs of rifles, and placed them in solitary confinement for prolonged periods. UNSMIL is also concerned about reports indicating that the acting prison director, a judicial police officer, is directly involved in the beating of detainees.

Transitional justice and national reconciliation

47. UNSMIL continued supporting national reconciliation through a comprehensive and inclusive programme, with assistance provided by the Peacebuilding Fund and UNDP. In early February, delegations from Ghadamis and the Tuareg communities displaced in Awal met for the first time since the displacement of members of the Tuareg community from Ghadamis. They agreed on a road map for reconciliation in Ghadamis, which included measures to document human rights violations committed during the conflict and to evaluate the destruction of properties and houses, with the goal of ensuring future accountability and reparations mechanisms. Two follow-up

committees were established to supervise and monitor the implementation of the road map.

48. On 21 February, representatives from the Tebu and Zway tribes of Kufrah District signed a reconciliation agreement after a two-day meeting in Tunis. The agreement sets out key principles for reconciliation, including freedom of movement, individual accountability for crimes and equal access to services without discrimination. The Tebu and Zway tribes agreed to form a high commission for peace and reconciliation in Kufrah which, once established, will receive technical support from UNSMIL.

49. On 14 March, technical experts and representatives of the Institution for the Care of Families of Martyrs and Missing Persons, the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Social Affairs, the Office of the Attorney General, families and civil society organizations agreed on a set of recommendations to address the issue of the filing of missing persons cases as a cornerstone for national reconciliation in Libya. Participants discussed ways to establish a national body on missing persons and to ensure the independence of such a body from any political or institutional divisions. They also requested more technical and financial support from specialized international organizations, the majority of such organizations having withdrawn from Libya in 2014.

50. UNSMIL continued to engage with the Misratah and Tawurgha' communities. The return of the displaced members of the Tawurgha' community, estimated at around 40,000 people, continued to be blocked by armed groups from Misratah, despite the announcement by the Presidency Council that they would be able to begin to return to their city on 1 February. An estimated 450 families who attempted to return on 1 February remain at a makeshift desert camp in Qararat al-Katif and in temporary accommodations in the town of Harawah, under difficult living conditions. On 27 March, the technical committee of the "Towards national reconciliation" project, supported by UNSMIL and composed of members of both communities and the Minister of State for Internally Displaced Persons Affairs, agreed on an eight-point plan to end the deadlock over the implementation of the agreement between Misratah and Tawurgha' on returns and reparations signed on 31 August 2016. The plan included a renewed commitment to comply with the Misratah-Tawurgha' agreement and called on the Presidency Council to put in place security measures to enable the return of those who had been forcibly displaced.

51. At the national level, the preparatory committee for national reconciliation, established by a decree of the Presidency Council on 14 May 2017, has yet to be activated. The national reparations fund for all conflict-related victims since 2011, decreed in October 2017, has also not been formed.

Judicial and penal system

52. Prosecutors, judges and other judicial staff continued to operate in a difficult security environment. Following the 15 March abduction of the military prosecutor general, military prosecutors organized a protest against attacks targeting members of the judiciary and called on the Presidency Council and UNSMIL to secure his release.

53. During the reporting period, the Office of the General Prosecutor reportedly agreed to establish a court inside the Mitiga detention complex, which is controlled by the Special Deterrence Force, amid concerns about the possible impact of such a move on the independence of the judiciary and fair trial guarantees. Plans are under way to reopen a facility for detained children in Tripoli, under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Children in Libya continued to be detained together with the adult prison population.

54. Violations of international human rights and humanitarian law were carried out with continued impunity. Despite regular announcements of investigations into allegations of war crimes and other violations by the Presidency Council and the Libyan National Army, no member of an armed group was brought to justice for committing crimes under international law, to the best of the Mission's knowledge. In one recent example, on 1 January a detainee held at the Ayn Zarah (B) prison reportedly died as a result of torture following a hunger strike by detainees protesting detention conditions and delays in the judicial process. No official was held to account pending investigations in relation to this incident.

55. The exact legal status and whereabouts of a field commander with the special forces under the Libyan National Army, Mahmoud al-Werfalli, who is subject to an arrest warrant issued on 15 August 2017 by the International Criminal Court for the crime of murder for his alleged involvement in summary executions, remain unclear.

56. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in cooperation with an Algerian school for penitentiary management, organized a two-month in-depth training in Algeria for 13 members of the Libyan judicial police, which concluded in February. The training took place under the UNODC regional prison project to strengthen prison management and foster the social reintegration of offenders. While encouraging South-South cooperation through this approach, UNODC received an official request from the Libyan judicial police to continue its support for the reform of prison systems in Libya in partnership with Algeria.

Human rights due diligence policy

57. The United Nations system in Libya continued its efforts towards the implementation of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces (A/67/775-S/2013/110, annex). UNSMIL and the United Nations country team are currently reviewing their support for Libyan security forces, with a view to mitigating identified risks of grave violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law or refugee law being committed by recipients of United Nations support.

58. A risk assessment and mitigating measures with respect to United Nations support for the Department for Combating Illegal Migration are currently under consideration.

C. Security sector

Support for Libyan planning for interim security arrangements

59. UNSMIL continued efforts to support the creation of more cohesive and unified Libyan security institutions that are responsive to civilian control. On an institutional level, UNSMIL and UNDP formally launched the Policing and Security Programme with the Ministers of Interior and Justice. As part of the process to professionalize the police, 1,500 police officers for Tripoli were selected to participate in a training-of-trainers programme. The Mission is also supporting efforts by the Ministry of Interior to engage with armed groups in Tripoli who are nominally a part of the ministry to progressively strengthen its authority. These efforts complement efforts to operationalize the greater Tripoli joint operation centre.

60. Nevertheless, efforts to strengthen institutional capacity are becoming more complicated as a result of ongoing competition between security actors. A case in point was the Presidency Council's appointment on 13 March of the new Tripoli military zone commander, Major General Abdul Abdul Basset, who, while favourable to the Tripoli armed groups, is viewed with suspicion by those in Zintan, including

the commander of the western military zone, Major General Juweili, who sent a force into Tripoli in March to take over strategic points on the coastal road west of Tripoli, heightening tensions.

61. UNSMIL increasingly engaged with actors beyond Tripoli. At the end of March, a series of meetings were held with security actors in the eastern region, including the police in Benghazi, as a first step towards engaging the Policing and Security Programme and the model police station in the east. The Mission also continued to engage with the Presidential Guard and the counter-terrorism unit set up by the Government of National Accord.

62. From 19 to 21 March, the Government of Egypt convened the sixth Libyan military unification meeting in Cairo. The meeting included delegations of military representatives appointed by both Prime Minister Serraj and Libyan National Army General Haftar. Meeting participants intended to finalize a draft agreement and work out implementation mechanisms. However, although there was general agreement on the need for the army to be under civilian control, there were several outstanding disagreements on the roles and responsibilities of senior positions, as well as opposition from security actors who were not involved in the talks.

Arms and ammunition management

63. The uncontrolled proliferation of arms and ammunition remains a threat to stability and security in Libya. In collaboration with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UNSMIL continued to assist Libyan authorities in their efforts to address threats posed by arms and ammunition stockpiles, and contamination by explosive hazards as a result of conflict. In Misratah, UNMAS completed a project for the clearance and destruction of 200 tons of explosive remnants of war. The second phase of the project, for the clearance and destruction of an additional 200 tons, commenced in February.

64. In order to assist the national security organizations in addressing the increased threat from improvised explosive devices, during the reporting period UNMAS completed the development of technical operating procedures for high-threat search and high-risk disposal.

65. The national standards for mine action, developed in support of the Libyan Mine Action Centre, are now in force. For the first time in four years, UNSMIL and UNMAS were able to celebrate the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 4 April in Libya, at an event organized by the Libyan Mine Action Centre.

D. Women's empowerment

66. Since the launch of the United Nations action plan, UNSMIL has strongly encouraged the meaningful participation of women, including in conservative communities, during its discussions on next steps in the political transition process. Dedicated efforts were undertaken to ensure the participation of women during the preparatory process leading up to the national conference. On International Women's Day on 8 March, my Special Representative addressed more than 250 women and encouraged stronger representation of women in leadership positions and in governance structures.

67. Recruitment commenced for the new Women's Support and Empowerment Unit, which is to be located within the Presidency Council. Once operational, the Unit will be the focal point for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in Libya. With funding from the Governments of Germany, the Netherlands and

Switzerland, UNSMIL, in cooperation with UNDP, facilitated the participation of five Libyan women from civil society organizations and academia at the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York in March 2018. Two side events were organized on the margin of the session, in cooperation with United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the delegation of the European Union and the Permanent Mission of Finland.

E. Young people, peace and security

68. During the reporting period, 180 Libyan youth participated in a series of workshops promoting "positive peace", organized by the United Nations Children's Fund through the Voluntary Humanitarian Returns programme of IOM and the Institute for Economics and Peace, through funding from the Government of Italy. Participants were asked to think about and develop innovative community development projects that reflect the values of positive peace, including not only the absence of violence but also a set of attitudes, structures and institutions that underpin and sustain peaceful societies. Participants returned to their communities and were encouraged to start campaigning to overcome adversity and conflict, and to build lasting peace.

F. Coordination and international assistance

69. Consultations continued on the United Nations strategic framework for the period 2019–2020, which will be finalized in due course. Ahead of the planned meeting in May or June of the Senior Policy Committee, which is the overarching body of the coordination framework for international technical cooperation with the Government of Libya, UNSMIL and the Ministry of Planning co-chaired a meeting in Tripoli on 27 March. The meeting stressed the importance of advance work on finalizing respective national priorities by sectoral working groups.

G. Humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance

70. The humanitarian situation remained fragile, with protracted political conflict and economic hardship. Periodic escalations of armed conflict resulted in small-scale displacements, while support for return movements remains hampered by a lack of systematic access for humanitarian actors.

71. The Libya Humanitarian Response Plan for 2018 remains poorly funded, with only 2 percent of the required $313 million, imperilling lifesaving and basic assistance for more than 1 million of the most vulnerable Libyans and risking an increase of community tensions as interventions to improve access to basic services are undermined. Increasing respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law remains a key priority, which requires the implementation of a wide range of protection interventions for all vulnerable groups.

72. There were over 704,000 migrants in Libya, including women (11 per cent of identified migrants) and children (10 per cent), nearly half of whom came from Chad, Egypt and the Niger. Between 1 January and 3 April, 6,161 migrants arrived in Italy from Libya. During the same period, 3,479 migrants were returned to the shores of Libya by the Libyan Coast Guard, of which 1,410 were returned during the reporting period. There were 359 deaths by sea registered on the central Mediterranean route. Almost all migrants who were returned received direct emergency assistance from IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR). By 3 April, IOM had assisted with the voluntary repatriation of 5,240 migrants to 28 countries of origin since the beginning of 2018.

73. There are 51,519 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Libya. Since the beginning of 2018, UNHCR has registered 6,860 individuals, of which 2,462 were registered in the month of March alone, mostly Syrians, followed by Palestinians and Sudanese. This represents a 70 per cent increase compared with the same period during the previous year. The vast majority of these registered refugees and asylum seekers are not in detention in Libya but could face the risk of detention and arbitrary arrest in the prevailing environment in the country.

74. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers continued to be subjected to arbitrary detention. There are currently an estimated 4,440 migrants in detention, of which 2,000 are refugees and asylum seekers. This figure refers to the individuals detained in official facilities and does not include detention centres maintained by militias. In March, the Libyan authorities reported the closure of 18 detention centres. The United Nations continues to call for the closure of detention centres and the respect of human rights for those who are detained.

75. United Nations agencies, including IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR and the World Health Organization (WHO), provided assistance, including protection screenings, medical psychosocial assistance and non-food items. They continued to improve living conditions to minimum standards through long-term interventions. IOM facilitated the release of 3,012 migrants from detention centres and supported the establishment of medical clinics in four detention centres. United Nations agencies provided medical assistance and material support to migrants and refugees who had been detained. UNHCR and implementing partners also undertook more than 335 monitoring visits to detention centres throughout Libya. In 2018, over 980 refugees were released from detention following advocacy by UNHCR. A large majority of the persons released were individuals who were evacuated to the emergency transit mechanism in the Niger and to Italy.

76. In response to the blocked return of the Tawurgha' community in early February, the humanitarian community provided assistance related to water, sanitation and hygiene, health, food and shelter to the internally displaced persons; however, protection concerns and needs remain. Demining teams have not been able to assess the contamination by explosive remnants of war in Tawurgha', owing mainly to lack of access. An accurate assessment of the extent of the contamination is important in preparation for a safe and dignified return. In response to the escalation of conflict in and around the southern city of Sabha, the humanitarian community provided health and food assistance, hygiene items and non-food items to the families.

77. WHO and UNFPA also supported the training of nurses and midwives from the rural area of Takinse in eastern Libya. UNFPA and the Bureau of Statistics and Census trained 154 Libyan enumerators on methodological framework and data collection tools in preparation of the forthcoming multisectoral Libyan household survey, which will cover 7,000 households (including those of non-displaced and internally displaced persons, and returnees) in various cities, notably Benghazi, Sabha and Sirte. This exercise will provide data on the impact of the crisis on the Libyan people, their priority needs and their coping strategies. Thus far in 2018, the World Food Programme has also distributed food to 65,488 people in need, primarily internally displaced persons, including 3,000 members of the Tawurgha' community.

78. Despite the fragile political and security situation, the UNDP Stabilization Facility for Libya delivered results in all regions of the country, extending the reach of the Government to citizens across Libya. By the end of the reporting period, the programme had received contributions amounting to $51.7 million, including $5 million from the Government of National Accord. The programme contributed to

the rehabilitation and equipping of hospitals, including prefabricated medical centres, and delivered 14 ambulances. Sixteen schools were rehabilitated or re-equipped and municipalities benefited from rehabilitation and re-equipping, along with improvements to the performance of electrical substations, water pumping stations and the sewerage system.

79. In the south, IOM continued to provide support to Sabha by starting the process of procuring olive seedlings to promote farmers' livelihoods and providing support to the Water and Waste Water Company of Sabha with essential water, sanitation and hygiene services to conflict-affected communities. IOM also finalized the construction of a wastewater tank in Tadamun, a marginalized neighbourhood of Sabha, which hosts 2,500 internally displaced persons and has suffered for years from wastewater leakages. In addition, IOM handed over the rehabilitated primary health-care unit in Al-Manshiyyah to the local health office in Sabha to support improved health services. UNDP is working with municipalities to strengthen the service delivery capacity of local authorities through the provision of equipment and the rehabilitation of public infrastructure in six municipalities: Bani Walid, Benghazi, Sabha, Kufrah, Sabratah and Tripoli.

80. During the reporting period, many United Nations agencies, funds and programmes reassigned their duty stations from Tunis to Tripoli and employed new staff. As of March 2018, United Nations coordination meetings were being held primarily in Tripoli.

V. Deployment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and security arrangements

81. Following the lifting of the evacuation status for Libya on 7 February, the presence and activities of the United Nations continued to gradually expand in Libya, including to locations outside Tripoli, particularly to Benghazi, where the United Nations intends to establish an office in the near future. United Nations agencies also finalized agreements with UNSMIL on the use of common premises.

Security and safety of staff members and operations

82. United Nations personnel in Libya continued to work in a high-risk security environment. Restrictions continued to be imposed on the movement of personnel in the country and on international staff travelling by air to Tripoli and other destinations within Libya.

VI. Observations

83. I welcome the progress made on the principal elements of the United Nations action plan aimed at facilitating the conclusion of the protracted transition in Libya.

84. I am encouraged by the high turnout in the recently completed voter registration update as a strong indication of a popular desire by the people of Libya to participate in electoral processes. The United Nations remains committed to continuing to support the electoral process. I reiterate the importance of creating a conducive environment for the holding of elections, including by putting in place an appropriate legal framework. In this regard, I urge the House of Representatives, in consultation with the High Council of State, to finalize the necessary electoral legislation expeditiously. I underline the importance of establishing a constitutional framework in order to provide the necessary architecture for the elections, end parallel institutions and establish a clear governance structure to end the transitional period.

85. I welcome the launch of the national conference process, with a multitude of events hosted across Libya. These meetings are a vital catalyst to encourage Libyan citizens to come forward and have their thoughts and opinions reflected in the public sphere. These efforts are fundamental to the re-establishment of a unified national polity. The meetings will prepare for a large national conference event later in the year and contribute towards a conducive environment for elections.

86. I welcome the progress made in different community reconciliation initiatives led by Libyan actors across the country. The reconciliation dialogue processes contribute to strengthening national unity in Libya and knitting together its social fabric. These Libyan-led efforts are crucial in alleviating tensions and averting further conflict through dialogue about the root causes of the differences between communities. The United Nations remains committed to providing support through the Peacebuilding Fund project. I express my gratitude to the donors who enable such support to continue.

87. I note positively the direct engagement between the House of Representatives and the High Council of State to agree on a mechanism to form a new executive authority. An inclusive and representative executive authority remains an important body for improving the daily conditions of the Libyan people, preparing for national elections and encouraging participation and acceptance of the election results.

88. It remains essential that all members of the displaced communities be able to return to their places of origin in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner. I commend the efforts made by my Special Representative to address the process of return for the Tawurgha' community. The return of this community and all others displaced since 2011 should not be delayed any further. I stress the importance of Libyan ownership of this issue and encourage the further efforts of the Government of National Accord to proactively work to implement reconciliation initiatives capable of allowing the return of the displaced.

89. Continued and active participation of Libyan women in key political and reconciliation processes is an encouraging sign of the advancement of gender equality and the participation of women in political life. I continue to urge all Libyan political, social and economic actors to engage fully to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

90. I am encouraged by the significant decrease in civilian casualties since the start of the year; however, I remain concerned about the insecurity in areas across Libya. I am dismayed at the repeated escalation of tensions and violence in and around the city of Sabha in particular, which has resulted in the loss of life and displacement of thousands of civilians. I call on all parties to respect international law, cease all acts of violence and commit to dialogue to address the root causes of grievances. While there are also growing concerns about the alleged presence and activities of ISIL and other terrorist groups in the south, I underline the urgent need to establish the rule of law in the area to ensure the cessation of hostilities among the warring factions and introduce more effective border control. I am also concerned by the high-profile kidnapping incidents, mainly in Tripoli, that occurred during the reporting period. The widespread proliferation of arms in the country also needs to be addressed owing to the threat they pose to law and order and to the extension of State authority. Reforming and unifying the military and security forces of Libya under civilian leadership is critical for the country's stabilization.

91. I note the important role of Libyan municipalities in delivering services at the local level and welcome efforts to hold municipal elections during 2018. The United Nations stands ready to provide further support as necessary to both endeavours.

92. I am concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation across parts of Libya. I am grateful to Member States for their contributions to the Libya Stabilization Fund and encourage further funding for the Libya Humanitarian Response Plan, which is aimed at supporting 1.1 million people in need.

93. I remain concerned by the ongoing human rights violations and abuses in detention, and prolonged arbitrary detention without due process. Such violations harm attempts to create a stable Libya that abides by the rule of law. Authorities must prioritize the release of all men, women and children detained arbitrarily, provide humane treatment and conditions for those detained lawfully and ensure that all are afforded due process rights. Releasing those unlawfully detained would enhance reconciliation efforts, while at the same time it would solve practical problems faced by the penitentiary system. I also encourage Libyan authorities to fully cooperate with the International Criminal Court, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1970 (2011), to help bring about justice and accountability for crimes under international law in Libya.

94. I am deeply disturbed by the continuing reports of human trafficking in Libya. I encourage the Libyan authorities to spare no effort to identify and prosecute those responsible for such heinous crimes. I call on all actors to cooperate with and support the efforts of the Libyan authorities to bring perpetrators to justice. The plight of migrants and the abuses they suffer in Libya and as they attempt to cross the Mediterranean continue to call for joint, concerted and urgent action. I am hopeful that the recently established African Union, European Union and United Nations task force will help to address the issue of migration in a comprehensive manner. I commend recent efforts by countries of origin to address the plight of their citizens. I also commend countries that have agreed to host migrants who are unable to return to their countries of origin and are in need of asylum. Nevertheless, more needs to be done and more resettlement spaces need to be made available for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers.

95. The unity of the international community in supporting a peaceful resolution to the Libyan crisis remains critical. In the months ahead, there is an opportunity to be seized of the best interests of the Libyan people. I therefore urge continued, positive collaboration with the United Nations to end the country's protracted transitional period and work together to establish new unified institutions based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. I wish to express my gratitude for the strong support that Member States have shown to my Special Representative and to the important role of regional organizations and our Quartet partners. I encourage them to ensure that the United Nations is able to maintain the momentum generated over the past few months.

96. I wish to reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Government of Nepal for providing the personnel of the United Nations Guard Unit. I also wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, and to the staff of the United Nations system in Libya for their dedication and hard work in support of a peaceful end to the transition in Libya and the establishment of stable and effective governance that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people.

United Nations S/2018/430

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 May 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 3 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 18 April 2018 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Al-Jafari, addressed to your Excellency, conveying the wish of the Government of the Republic of Iraq to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (see annex).

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammed Hussein **Bahr Aluloom**
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations

18-07613 (E) 140518 140518

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Annex to the letter dated 3 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

It is my pleasure and honour to convey to you the wish of the Government of Iraq that the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) should be extended for a further period of one year, ending on 31 July 2019, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the mandate and conditions set out in Security Council resolution 1770 (2007).

The Government of Iraq reaffirms the importance of the role of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, including the United Nations country team, and UNAMI in providing advice, support and assistance to the Iraqi people and the Government, upon the request of the latter.

Having regained full control of Iraqi territory that had been in the hands of the terrorist gangs of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Government is preparing to begin the reconstruction of Iraq, in particular the towns and areas that were destroyed, and to lay the groundwork for the successful conduct of the forthcoming legislative elections. UNAMI must therefore play a significant role in that regard, by providing Iraq with the assistance that it needs to respond to the challenges and demands facing the country.

You are no doubt aware that fighting the war against the terrorist gangs of ISIL and regaining control of all Iraqi cities has caused tremendous destruction to the infrastructure of those cities and displaced large numbers of civilians. Iraq therefore reaffirms that it needs the assistance of the Mission and the country team in order to take all the measures that are required to restore stability, rebuild the liberated cities, ensure the return of internally displaced persons and provide a decent life for all Iraqis.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim Abdulkarim **Al-Jafari**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq

United Nations S/2018/431

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 May 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 7 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period from 5 to 7 May 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

18-07496 (E) 110518 110518

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Annex to the letter dated 7 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (5 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire: five in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire: one in Aleppo Governorate and one in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Tall Alam, Aleppo Governorate: 445 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,801 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,550.96 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 88 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 79,621 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,509.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (6 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire: three in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents of gunfire: two in Hama Governorate and one in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Hawash, Homs Governorate: 445 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,802 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,552.86 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 193 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 79,814 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,509.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (7 May 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported nine incidents of gunfire: six in Aleppo Governorate and three in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: one in Dar'a, one in Hama and one in Idlib.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Hawash, Homs Governorate: 445 food parcels were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,803 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,554.76 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 36 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 79,850 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 2,509.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/432

Security Council

Distr.: General
8 May 2018

Original: English

Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2391 (2017) of 8 December 2017, the Security Council welcomed the progress achieved in making the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel fully operational and requested me to take the steps necessary to conclude a technical agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the States members of Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), with a view to providing operational and logistical support to the Joint Force through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

2. The Council also requested me, in close coordination with the States members of G-5 Sahel and the African Union, to report on the activities of the Joint Force, focusing on progress in making it operational, international support for it, the implementation of the technical agreement, challenges encountered and the implementation by the G-5 Sahel countries of a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework and the human rights due diligence policy.

II. Operationalization of the Joint Force

3. Pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017), the States members of G-5 Sahel, the United Nations and the European Union, at the margins of the international high-level conference for the Sahel, held in Brussels on 23 February 2018, signed a technical agreement defining the scope and scale of United Nations support for the Joint Force through MINUSMA. Under the resolution, the support comprises medical evacuations, access to life-support consumables (fuel, water and rations), the use of United Nations engineering plant equipment and material, and assistance to be provided by uniformed MINUSMA engineering enabling units in the preparation of the Joint Force's operational bases in Mali. The support will be provided to Joint Force elements operating on Malian territory, in line with the Mission's mandated area of operations. The European Union and the United Nations also signed a separate financial agreement on the modalities for transferring funds between them.

4. Efforts by the G-5 Sahel countries to make the Joint Force fully operational continued. On 8 January, the ministers for foreign affairs and ministers of defence of those countries attended an extraordinary ministerial meeting in Bamako, which resulted in the creation of a dedicated trust fund for the Joint Force and the

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establishment of the Defence and Security Bureau, which will coordinate and liaise with the headquarters of the Joint Force in Sévaré, Mali, and the Group's permanent secretariat in Nouakchott. On 6 and 7 February, the Heads of State of the Group met for their annual summit in Niamey, during which its acting presidency was rotated from Mali to the Niger. The Heads of State endorsed the outcomes of the January ministerial meeting and subsequently, under the acting presidency of the Niger, requested assistance from the United Nations in enhancing the capacities of the permanent secretariat and in setting up the trust fund. On 23 March, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its 759th meeting, decided to extend the deployment of the Joint Force by 12 months, effective 12 April 2018.

5. The security situation in the Sahel, as described in detail in my previous report on the matter (S/2017/869), continues to worsen. A large-scale terrorist attack in the heart of Ouagadougou on 2 March, continual attacks on defence and security forces in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and an attack, unprecedented in duration, sophistication and scope, on forces of the French Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA on 14 April in Timbuktu, Mali, bear witness to the trend. State authority remains absent in large areas of central and northern Mali and in northern Burkina Faso. The local population lacks access to basic social services and continues to suffer from poverty and hunger. The underlying root causes of instability, in particular weak political, financial and security governance, under-development and exclusion, remain unchanged and largely unaddressed. The presidential elections due to be held in Mali in July 2018 will be a decisive moment in shaping the future of that country and could have a significant impact on the region.

A. Deployment update: military component

6. The Joint Force reached its initial operational capability in October 2017 and is projected to become fully operational in the coming months. As at 13 April, six out of a total of seven battalions had been identified by States members of the Group. Two thirds of the troops designated for the Central Sector have reportedly deployed: 130 out of 650 troops of the Mali battalion in Boulikessi, 528 out of 650 troops of the Niger battalion in Bankilaré and 596 out of 650 troops of the Burkina Faso battalion in Dori. The Joint Force will define new timelines for becoming fully operational once the relevant criteria have been established and approved by the chiefs of defence staff of countries of the Group at the next meeting of the Defence and Security Committee, which were to be held on 10 and 11 May in Ouagadougou. The Committee will also establish timelines for the transfer of authority over the individual battalions from Group countries to the Joint Force's central command.

7. The Commander of the Joint Force, Brigadier General Didier Dacko, conducted an initial assessment visit to the Central Sector, supported by the Barkhane force, from 4 to 9 April to determine compliance with deployment requirements. The visit, along with an inspection visit to Sector East and Sector West headquarters, had initially been scheduled for late 2017, but had to be postponed owing to a lack of means of transport. His findings are expected to be approved in late April. A second assessment visit in Sector East to Wour, Chad, and Madama, Niger, is ongoing.

8. The Joint Force's headquarters and central command post in Sévaré and the three sector headquarters, in Niamey (Central Sector), in Wour, Chad (Sector East), and in Nbeiket el Ahouach, Mauritania (Sector West), have reached 80 per cent of their staffing capacity. Initial assessments of human resources, however, had to be revised and the staffing ceilings for the four command posts have been adjusted accordingly. The central command post is expected to be reinforced by 120 additional staff officers and the three sector headquarters would require a total of 64 additional

posts. The Defence and Security Committee is expected to confirm the exact number of additional posts required at its May meeting.

9. At their extraordinary summit, held in Bamako on 2 July 2017, the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries decided to prioritize the operationalization of the Joint Force in the Central Sector, as the majority of terrorist attacks were being carried out in that region. Since then, the Joint Force has conducted two military operations in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. In Operation Hawbi, which was carried out from 28 October to 11 November, three inter-army detachments under Joint Force command coordinated with the armed forces of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, and with the Barkhane force. The central command post in Sévaré directed the operation with the support of the tactical command post in Niamey.

10. From 30 December 2017 to 15 January 2018, the Joint Force conducted Operation Pagnali in the forest area between Tofagala, Ouoromana and Serba, close to Boulikessi, in Mali. The objective was to destroy the supply chains of armed terrorist groups and to contain their movements in the border area between Mali and Burkina Faso. Four tactical inter-army combat units and nine aircraft from those two countries participated in the operation.

11. The Joint Force is preparing its operational plan, which is expected to be approved at the next meeting of the Defence and Security Committee in early May.

12. On 29 January, the Group's permanent secretariat and Brigadier General Dacko met representatives of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Nouakchott. They agreed to work together to build capacity in the areas of civil-military coordination, gender mainstreaming, human rights, social cohesion and conflict management.

13. The Joint Force also identified the building of two new sites in Boulikessi and Tessit, the rehabilitation of camps in Guiré, Nampala, Ngoumacoura and the enhancement of its headquarters in Sévaré as priority construction projects. The precarious conditions in and around those sites present a major security threat and are delaying the deployment of remaining troops. Building bunkers in the camps to protect personnel, arms, ammunition, equipment and supplies is a key priority. Until camp infrastructure in Nbeiket el Ahouach and Wour is improved, the command posts for Sector West and Sector East are temporarily located in Néma, Mauritania, and N'Djamena, respectively. Given the lack of transport assets, the distances between the sector headquarters, command posts and battalion camps constitute a major challenge.

14. The Joint Force urgently requires air assets for gathering intelligence and transport, as well as communications equipment. It currently relies on the national armies of the G-5 Sahel countries or the Barkhane force to conduct reconnaissance missions. Communications equipment is in short supply and the different systems used by the G-5 Sahel countries are not always compatible or encrypted. The lack of expertise, training and equipment for detecting and mitigating the threat of mines is also a source of great concern, in particular given the asymmetrical threat posed in the areas in which the Joint Force operates. It also requires assistance with developing outreach and communication strategies to target the population in its area of operations.

15. On 2 March, Brigadier General Dacko requested technical assistance from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to meet the asymmetrical threat posed by improvised explosive devices. His request envisages the provision of advice and assistance by the Mine Action Service in order to strengthen the military and civilian

capacity in the countries concerned and at headquarters in Sévaré. An assessment of how to provide such support is currently under way.

B. Deployment update: police and civilian component

16. In addition to the military component, comprising 5,000 elements, the strategic concept of operations of the Joint Force, referred to in resolution 2359 (2017) and previously endorsed by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, includes a police and civilian component.

17. In December 2017, the Government of Mali, in its capacity as acting president of the Group, supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), held a workshop in Bamako to define the role and responsibilities of the police component, in particular with regard to provost and judicial police. A conceptual framework for the structure and operation of the police component was adopted at an extraordinary meeting of the Defence and Security Committee on 8 December.

18. Under the conceptual framework, the police component will consist of a provost police unit, integrated into the military component of the Joint Force, and an investigation unit under the command of national specialized units combating terrorism and transnational organized crime. The core responsibilities of the provost police will include monitoring military units and providing them with training on human rights and upholding the rule of law. The investigation units will be responsible for the collection, analysis and exchange of information and for investigating crimes, gathering evidence and pursuing criminals and the perpetrators of human rights violations. The police component will also include a police adviser to the Joint Force Commander, appointed by States members of the Group on a rotating basis for a term of one year, renewable once, and supported by a secretariat and liaison officers to coordinate with the Security Cooperation Platform, the Sahelian Threat Analysis and Early Warning Centre and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The police adviser will monitor the development of legal frameworks in the Sahel, advise the Joint Force Commander on legal aspects of operations, anticipate legal issues and their solutions and assist the Commander in the coordination of cross-border operations by facilitating the exchange of information between investigation units. In operational matters, the police adviser will monitor and analyse threats relating to terrorism and transnational organized crime, facilitate the collection and exchange of information between investigation units, participate in planning operations and provide the Commander with police expertise and information relating to the judicial police. He or she will also be tasked with centralizing data on arrests.

19. The conceptual framework requires strict compliance with international law provisions regarding the treatment of persons suspected of terrorism or other criminal acts, the integration of the women and peace and security agenda into the work of the police component and measures for protecting children. It also stipulates that the work of the police component should comply strictly with human rights and international humanitarian law and with the human rights compliance framework of the Joint Force.

20. From 10 to 12 April, the Government of the Niger, supported by UNODC, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and other international partners, held a workshop in Niamey on making the police component operational, with the aim of defining the component's scale and scope, including the number of police officers to be deployed in total and within each battalion. Participants agreed to entrust the Director General of the National Police of the Niger with the task of establishing a commission composed of States members of the Group, UNODC and

other international partners to determine the specific needs of each of those States in creating the police component and to assist them with setting up its investigation and provost units as soon as possible.

21. In order to ensure due process and in line with the strategic concept of operations, investigative police units deployed to the Joint Force will be required to work with national authorities in each of the G-5 Sahel countries. In Mali, the Specialized Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime has exclusive jurisdiction over those matters. To avoid jurisdictional conflict, terrorism and organized crime suspects apprehended by the Joint Force in Mali will be handed over to the Unit, which will thus play a key role in ensuring that such suspects are properly investigated and brought to justice in Mali, in accordance with human rights standards. The Unit will also be responsible for implementing all judicial cooperation requests from other G-5 Sahel countries.

C. Permanent secretariat and institutional framework

22. On 6 February, at their fourth annual summit, the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries endorsed the appointment of Maman Sidikou as the Group's new permanent secretary. Mr. Sidikou, of the Niger, replaced Najim Elhadj Mohamed, who held the post for three years.

23. Pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017), UNOWAS is mandated to provide technical assistance, within its existing mandate and as its resources permit, to the permanent secretariat of the Group with a view to enhancing cooperation between G-5 Sahel countries in the areas of security, governance and development. In line with that mandate and pursuant to the decision reached by the Group's Heads of State at their annual summit in February, UNOWAS is supporting the establishment of the secretariat's Defence and Security Bureau in Nouakchott, thereby restructuring the secretariat and broadening its responsibilities. Staff for the Bureau will be provided by countries of the Group. Burkina Faso and Mali have each nominated defence and security assistants and Mauritania has designated a secretary. Those posts will be staffed and financed by States members of the Group on a one-year rotating basis.

24. The Group's Council of Ministers has approved the standard operating procedures of the Joint Force trust fund and the terms of reference for its support and steering committees. States members of the Group are expected to make nominations for positions in the fund's secretariat, which will be led by a coordinator and staffed with technical personnel in areas such as finance, partnerships management, procurement and supply chain management.

25. On 23 March, at the margins of the extraordinary summit of the African Union in Kigali, representatives of the G-5 Sahel countries signed a memorandum of understanding with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the provision of equipment and technical and financial support to make the Joint Force fully operational. In the memorandum, measures are outlined for enhancing coordination between the permanent secretariat and the African Union, including through the establishment of a strategic coordination cell in Addis Ababa to provide technical assistance for the Joint Force trust fund and to mobilize resources.

D. Human rights due diligence policy and human rights compliance framework

26. In resolution 2391 (2017), the Security Council underlined the need for Joint Force operations to be conducted in full compliance with international law and for

G-5 Sahel countries and the Joint Force to take steps to minimize the risk of harm to civilians in all areas of operation. It also called upon the States members of G-5 Sahel to establish a robust compliance framework to prevent, investigate, address and publicly report violations and abuses of human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law relating to the Joint Force. It also noted that the implementation of United Nations support is to be undertaken in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces.

27. On the basis of previous experience and lessons learned in Afghanistan and Somalia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in consultation with the Joint Force and other relevant United Nations offices and departments, developed a compliance framework that was endorsed through the signature of the technical agreement by the United Nations, the European Union and the States members of G-5 Sahel at the Brussels conference on 23 February. The main elements of the framework are outlined in the agreement. The framework provides for a set of risk-reduction and mitigation mechanisms designed to prevent and address the possible adverse effects of the Joint Force's operations on local communities. They include but are not limited to: the screening of troops and personnel to ensure that they are selected, recorded and identifiable as belonging to the Joint Force and its operations; generalized and specific training for troops and personnel, before and during deployment, relevant to the operations; the adoption and dissemination of rules and regulations and standard operating procedures for the conduct of operations by the Joint Force; a mechanism to ensure that operations planning takes into account the requirements of human rights and international humanitarian law and protection concerns, including measures specific to women and children; mechanisms for conducting after-action reviews to assess the impact of operations on civilians and human rights; mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on the conduct of operations by the Joint Force, including casualty and incident tracking and analysis and reporting on the implementation of the compliance framework; and the creation of effective accountability processes in the countries of the Group to address violations.

28. In response to a request by the Group for support in implementing the compliance framework, OHCHR, MINUSMA and other partners are finalizing an operational support plan that will include technical assistance to the Joint Force in Sévaré, mobile monitoring of the Joint Force's operations and technical assistance and monitoring of follow-up actions taken in response to allegations of human rights abuses in each of the Group's member States. A plan to reinforce the capacity of the Mission to ensure that United Nations support provided to the Joint Force complies with the human rights due diligence policy is also being finalized. Such compliance is a prerequisite for United Nations support provided pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017).

29. Pending finalization of the costing and disbursement of donor contributions for the establishment of the compliance framework, the Peacebuilding Fund provided critical seed funding of $590,640, enabling OHCHR to deploy technical experts to Mopti and Sévaré to develop the framework with the Joint Force's central command and work with national authorities and United Nations partners on its implementation in G-5 Sahel countries. Support for the Joint Force in terms of upholding human rights and international humanitarian law will require a sustained commitment by Member States and donors of political and financial resources over the entire course of its deployment. The presence of a civilian component in the Joint Force with which the United Nations and other partners can engage will be essential for putting many aspects of the framework into practice. For the framework to fulfil its potential as a tool for protecting populations and become a model for future operations, support will

need to be sustained beyond the current round of projected funding for its implementation so as to ensure its maintenance in the long term.

30. During the reporting period, MINUSMA continued to monitor the human rights situation in Mali, including in relation to the activities and operations of the Joint Force. In a letter dated 20 January 2018, the Joint Force formally notified the Mission of a case that occurred in connection with Operation Pagnali, in which it is alleged that a 51-year-old man was killed and a 29-year-old woman was injured when a Joint Force patrol opened fire in a residential area during an altercation with assailants. The Mission is investigating the incident. The Joint Force also offered to cooperate fully with an investigation by the police in Sévaré into the matter.

31. Operation Hawbi led to the arrest and detention, on 7 November 2017, of nine members of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, initially suspected as terrorists. The Joint Force transferred them to the custody of the police in Gao two days later. They were released on 12 November for lack of evidence.

32. In December and January, nationals of Burkina Faso reportedly fled to Gossi, in the Timbuktu region of Mali, to escape security operations led by forces of Burkina Faso in the border area. As at 28 February, 2,373 refugees from Burkina Faso had been registered by the authorities in Mali, supported by representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. More remain to be registered. The internal displacement of 9,534 Malian nationals in the Timbuktu region was also highlighted in the displacement tracking matrix of the Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action in Mali. At present, there is no indication as to whether the displacement occurred as a result of operations by the Joint Force or other defence and security forces.

E. Issues and challenges

33. Progress in making the Joint Force fully operational and mobilizing international funding for its support has been slow and, at times, cumbersome. Initially, it was due to be fully operational by March 2018, but the deadline has been set back. A variety of factors are contributing to the delay. The rate of deployment has been slowed by major deficiencies in terms of training and equipment and the fact that the national defence and security forces in G-5 Sahel countries are already overstretched.

34. The lack of progress in the peace process in Mali, combined with the deteriorating security situation, can only fuel further radicalization, especially among vulnerable groups. The success of the Joint Force's future operations is, however, intimately linked to progress in the peace process. Security operations must complement efforts to provide the civilian population with a tangible peace dividend. At the same time, the Joint Force could provide an important bulwark against the spread of violent extremism, terrorism and transnational organized crime when fully operational. That, however, would also require the full implementation of the human rights compliance framework with a view to preventing and mitigating any adverse impact of operations on civilians.

35. It is important that the G-5 Sahel countries intensify efforts to create unity of purpose and develop a shared vision and a sound political framework for the Joint Force. That requires a further revision of the strategic concept of operations, as recommended in my previous report. It also requires an intensified dialogue with the international community to mobilize the requisite support for such an endeavour and to ensure that all key partners are aligned in their support.

III. International support for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

A. Political support

36. Following the adoption of resolution 2391 (2017), a series of high-level meetings were conducted to mobilize international support for the Joint Force. On 11 December, European Union ministers for foreign affairs met their counterparts from States members of G-5 Sahel in Brussels. Two days later, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, and the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, had a high-level meeting with the Heads of State of the Group and other leaders in La Celle-Saint-Cloud, France. The matters of funding and measures of international support for the Joint Force were discussed at both meetings. On 8 January, ministers of defence and ministers for foreign affairs of the G-5 Sahel countries met in Bamako and announced the creation of a trust fund and the establishment of the Defence and Security Bureau. The need for the complementarity of funding mechanisms and effective communication and coordination between the European Union coordination hub and the Group was emphasized at a meeting of the ministers of defence of the Group's member States hosted by the Government of France on 15 January in Paris. At the summit of the Heads of State of the Group, held in Niamey on 6 February, timelines for the deployment of the Joint Force were approved. On 23 February, the technical agreement on MINUSMA support for the Joint Force and the financial agreement between the United Nations and the European Union were signed at the Brussels conference. On 23 March, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union extended the mandate of the Joint Force mandate for another year. On 25 April, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations hosted a high-level meeting in New York, co-chaired by the Group, the European Union and the United Nations, to mobilize additional donor support for the Joint Force. Donors were urged to make funds available for MINUSMA engineering support for the Joint Force, given the serious lack of equipment in the Joint Force and the dire conditions in and around their operational bases.

37. The flurry of high-level meetings underlines the ownership by the Group of the Joint Force and its activities and the sustained interest and commitment of the international community to rally behind this important cause. Discussions were, however, dominated by practical concerns with regard to the implementation of the technical agreement and efforts to mobilize funds. In resolution 2391 (2017), the importance of the link between the peace process in Mali, the stabilization role of MINUSMA and the support it will provide to the Joint Force are emphasized, but little attention was paid during the reporting period to a broader political framework for the Joint Force. The strengthening of the Group's permanent secretariat, creation of the Defence and Security Bureau and signature of the memorandum of understanding between the African Union and the Group are important steps towards situating the operations of the Joint Force in a broader political and institutional framework for a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges facing the Sahel. No progress was made during the reporting period, however, on establishing a support group that, in line with paragraphs 4 to 6 of resolution 2391 (2017), could bring together the Governments of the Group's member States, regional stakeholders, donors and technical partners, centralize support efforts and define the overall vision for and future direction of the Joint Force.

B. Financial support and efforts to mobilize resources

1. European Union coordination hub

38. At the request of several of its member States, the European Union established a coordination hub, led by the European Union Military Staff, in November 2017 to coordinate support in the international donor community for the Joint Force. It holds regular meetings attended by representatives of the member States of the Union and other States, including Canada, Japan, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America, and of international organizations. The hub liaises with key G-5 Sahel stakeholders, such as its presidency and permanent secretariat, the Commander of the Joint Force and the African Union, through the Union's delegations and its common security and defence policy missions in the Sahel. The hub is first and foremost a tool for the countries of the Group and the international donor community to mobilize support as efficiently and effectively as possible.

2. African Peace Facility

39. The African Peace Facility is a mechanism of the European Union through which international voluntary contributions may be channelled to the Joint Force. Through it, the Union has been involved in efforts to make the Joint Force operational from its inception, initially with a contribution of €50 million for the provision of services, infrastructure and equipment. At the Brussels conference, the Union increased its contribution to €100 million and broadened coverage to include funding for MINUSMA assistance to the Joint Force (€10 million), efforts by OHCHR to implement the compliance framework (€10 million) and the Group's governance structure (€5 million).

3. International high-level donor conference for the Sahel

40. At the Brussels conference, member States of the European Union and other countries pledged €88 million in support of the Joint Force, bringing all pledges received to date to a total of €414 million. The G-5 Sahel had estimated the total cost for the start-up and first year of operations of the Joint Force at €423 million. Some pledges have not been earmarked, and the disbursement of most pledges is still pending.

4. Operational and logistical support

41. In January and February, negotiations took place in Niamey, Bamako and Nouakchott to conclude a tripartite agreement defining the scope and modalities for reimbursing MINUSMA for its support for the Joint Force, pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017). The support for the Joint Force by the Mission under the technical agreement of 23 February is to be provided within a broader political framework of efforts aimed at supporting the peace process in Mali and stabilization efforts throughout the Sahel. The support is directed at the defence and security forces of the States members of G-5 Sahel participating in operations of the Joint Force on Malian territory and requires the application of the human rights due diligence policy.

42. MINUSMA support is provided subject to the full reimbursement of the United Nations through a financing mechanism coordinated by the European Union. The financial agreement between the Union and United Nations, a Pillar Assessed Grant or Delegation Agreement, provides for the payment of €10 million through the African Peace Facility and constitutes the financial framework in which the modalities for reimbursement are set forth. On the basis of an initial needs assessment carried out by the Mission and the Joint Force, the cost of the support is estimated at

approximately $44 million over two years. In the absence of pledges to cover the full cost, initial assistance will be limited to life-support consumables and casualty evacuation. The Mission has made all the necessary arrangements to provide such support, upon request by the Joint Force, and will begin to do so upon receipt of the funds contributed by the European Union. The Mission has also conducted initial assessments on the capabilities and material needed to provide engineering assistance within its capacity and to ensure that such support can be provided as soon as resources become available.

43. The Joint Force has identified the enhancement and fortification of six camps in Mali as a priority (see para. 13). The Mission undertook a reconnaissance visit to the Tessit site on 12 April and assessment visits to the remaining five sites, including Sévaré, between 26 and 28 April. Costs are estimated at an average of $600,000 per hectare for construction according to United Nations standards. In line with initial assessments and pending the outcome of the reconnaissance visits and availability of the necessary funding, Mission engineers envisage the construction of three 4-ha and two 10-ha camps and rehabilitation of the Joint Force's main headquarters at a total cost of $19.5 million.

44. The Mission set up an internal coordination group made up of civilian, police and military components in December 2017 to plan, assess and review the needs of the Joint Force. At the Mission's initiative, a tripartite mechanism with the Joint Force and the European Union was created in January 2018 as a platform to determine at regular meetings how to implement the technical and financial agreements.

45. The Mission has prepared a provisional annual support plan with standard operating procedures for implementing the technical agreement and a logistics expert has been assigned to Sévaré to coordinate with the Joint Force. The Force is developing, with assistance from the European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces and the Barkhane force, an annual operational plan that will be submitted for approval at the next meeting of the Defence and Security Committee. The Mission will then align its support plan with Joint Force's operational plan. The Mission stands ready to recruit additional civilian capacity to provide the agreed support when additional resources become available.

46. In line with resolutions 2364 (2017) and 2391 (2017), the Mission and the Joint Force have each assigned one military liaison officer to the other's headquarters to facilitate information sharing and coordination within their respective mandates. The Mission has also established a forward command post in Sévaré.

5. Bilateral support

47. Several countries are providing bilateral assistance to the Joint Force and to the armed and security forces of the G-5 Sahel countries to complement border control and counter-terrorism efforts. The Barkhane force assisted with the planning and conduct of the Joint Force's first operations. Following its pledge of $60 million in support of the Group, announced on 30 October 2017, the United States is providing training and a technical support package to the Joint Force and logistics and engineering support to the armed forces of Burkina Faso. In addition, the United States Africa Command will assign two planners to the Joint Force's Central Sector headquarters. At the high-level meeting held in La Celle-Saint-Cloud on 13 December 2017, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates pledged $100 million and $30 million respectively to support the Joint Force. Further pledges were made by bilateral partners during the Brussels conference but have not yet materialized.

IV. Support options going forward

48. In my previous report, I presented four options for United Nations support for the Joint Force, ranging from the establishment of a dedicated United Nations office to support the provision of aid by MINUSMA, limited to the territory of Mali and relying on the Mission's existing logistics and supply chains. Resolution 2391 (2017) and the technical agreement align with the latter option.

49. In the present report, I will again put forward two options for more extensive and comprehensive United Nations support, using assessed contributions. Enhancing the role of the United Nations in providing support to the Joint Force through assessed contributions would allow for more predictable financing and thereby facilitate more precise, efficient and longer term planning, while also strengthening the strategic and tactical partnership with the Joint Force.

50. The first option would comprise a support package delivered by a dedicated United Nations support office, akin to the United Nations Support Office in Somalia for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). As in the case of AMISOM, the payment of salaries and stipends should not be assumed to be a component of the support package. However, support could be developed to include, exceptionally, the reimbursement of major contingent-owned equipment and the reimbursement of basic and essential supplies and services required to allow Joint Force contingents to sustain themselves. If mandated accordingly, the areas of operations of such a support office would cover the entire territory of the G-5 Sahel countries and mirror the area of operations of the Joint Force, once it reaches phase two of its strategic concept of operations. A support package mandated by the Security Council and a support office separate from MINUSMA could cover the types of support outlined in paragraph 47 of my previous report, including but not limited to: aeromedical evacuation capacity and related medical support; life-support services, including rations, fuel and water adapted to the requirements of the Joint Force; consumables, including field defence stores, first aid kits, tactical tentage, accommodation materiel and medical supplies; technical assistance to mitigate the threat posed by improvised explosive devices; technical support to apply and implement compliance frameworks, including the human rights due diligence policy; capacity for managing its environmental footprint; maintenance contracts, geospatial, telecommunications and information technology and infrastructure support.

51. The second option would entail adjusting the mandate of the Mission to enhance its support for the Joint Force and providing it with additional resources to establish more permanent support structures and mechanisms. Such enhanced support could include the elements already authorized under resolution 2391 (2017): medical and casualty evacuation; access to life-support consumables (fuel, water and rations); the use of United Nations engineering plant equipment and material; and uniformed MINUSMA engineering enabling units to assist in the preparation of Joint Force operational bases in Mali (para. 13 (b)). It could also be expanded to include other types of support not covered by other partners. Support would be limited to the Central and West sectors, whereas bilateral partners should focus their support role on sector East, where the United Nations has no proximate presence. This option bears the risk of Mission overstretch, given its comprehensive and multidimensional mandate. Moreover, since the Joint Force is not yet fully operational and the Mission has yet to begin implementing its current support measures, no assessment of the impact of this second option on the Mission and the implementation of its core mandate is available. The creation of a dedicated support office as outlined above would allow for a clearer distinction between the Mission's role in support of the peace process in Mali and that of assisting the Joint Force.

V. Broader challenges in the Sahel

52. Making the Joint Force fully operational is one of several parallel initiatives to tackle the root causes of instability in the Sahel. Given the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the area, a security-centred approach to countering the spread of violent extremism, terrorism and transnational organized crime is necessary. It should, however, form part of a broader, holistic vision. A key challenge in the months to come will be to ensure that the Joint Force's operations fall within a comprehensive strategy for the Sahel that is owned and directed by all the Sahel countries, beyond those that make up the G-5 Sahel, and backed by bilateral, regional and multilateral partners.

A. Priority investment programme

53. The G-5 Sahel is completing a review of its priority investment programme, integrating new projects and taking into account other regional frameworks. Responding to a formal request from the Group's permanent secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme sent an expert to the secretariat to assist it in recalibrating the investment programme, thereby ensuring alignment with the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, and to develop a set of tools and strategic documents. The review should lead to an increase in the number of projects to be presented to donors at a round table meeting scheduled for December. It also encompasses ongoing projects in the Sahel and new cross-border projects proposed by Chad and the Niger.

B. United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

54. The United Nations is working to recalibrate its integrated strategy for the Sahel, which will be implemented in partnership with the 10 countries identified under the strategy, including those of the G-5 Sahel, and aligned with their national and regional priorities. A support plan for the Sahel is also being developed to trigger investment and mobilize further resources in the region. More detailed information will be provided in June in my report on the activities of UNOWAS.

55. On 21 March, I appointed Ibrahim Thiaw as my Special Adviser for the Sahel, who will support my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of UNOWAS in recalibrating the strategy and developing the support plan for the Sahel. Mr. Thiaw's national, regional and international experience will lend strength to efforts to serve millions of people in one of the world's most complex areas and contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development there.

56. On 15 March, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel attended the sixth meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel in N'Djamena, which was organized with the support of UNOWAS and the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel. The need for a holistic approach to challenges in the region, combining security concerns with development priorities, was emphasized at the meeting. The High Representative of the Mission, Pierre Buyoya, stressed the need to maintain the Platform as a unique forum for discussions involving all stakeholders. The Platform is the highest-level regionally owned mechanism for enhancing consistency between the multilayered regional strategies for the Sahel and national and local strategies.

C. Regional, subregional and national initiatives

57. On 28 March, the Deputy Secretary-General attended the Strategic Consultative Meeting on the Sahel in Nouakchott, organized by the African Union. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss security and development efforts driven by the countries, people and institutions of the subregion and to ensure alignment with similar efforts by the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations and other international partners. The Deputy Secretary-General underlined the need to increase the investment of the United Nations in the Sahel, which had been less than optimal in comparison with its investment in other areas facing similar levels of fragility and instability. That investment should be directed at priority areas identified in the process of recalibrating the strategy for the Sahel: economic growth; governance and the rule of law; youth, women and girls; and climate change. It should also be used to expand livelihood options and boost access to basic goods and services. She emphasized that the United Nations should work hand-in-hand with the African Union in addressing challenges in the Sahel, and that their pursuit of common aims would be facilitated by frameworks on peace and security and development signed by them recently.

58. The flow of illicit drugs and firearms and the movement of terrorists in the Sahel have flourished along traditional trade and migration routes, adversely affecting security, good governance and development. In that context, UNODC plans to help Governments in the Sahel to improve the accessibility, efficiency and accountability of their criminal justice systems by providing legislative, criminal justice and law enforcement advisory services and technical assistance and promoting regional and international cooperation. With the assistance of UNODC, the authorities in Mali have seized 1.7 tons of drugs since 2017. Inter-service joint airport interdiction task forces have been set up and trained in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. As a result, a total of 35 kg of drugs was seized at international airports in the Sahel and more than $1 million in foreign currencies was confiscated in 2017.

59. A great number of firearms are in circulation in West and Central Africa, as a result of the numerous conflicts in the region. UNODC works with national authorities to address the issue in various ways: assisting with the harmonization of their legislation with the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; providing support for efforts to mark, collect and destroy firearms; improving security and effective record-keeping with regard to firearms; training criminal justice personnel; and building investigative and prosecutorial capacity to deal with trafficking in firearms. UNODC has provided the authorities in Burkina Faso and Mali with registration software for marking equipment for use with State-owned firearms, resulting in the marking of more than 13,500 firearms in those countries since 2015.

60. UNODC supports the strengthening of legislative and policy frameworks to build the capacity of the authorities in G-5 Sahel countries to investigate cases of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, to identify and protect the victims and to improve data collection on the nature and scale of the phenomenon, and works to enhance cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. With UNODC technical assistance, police academy instructors in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger have approved training manuals on combating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

61. Reform of the security sector is under way in several countries of the Group. Not all of the Group's member States have units for combating transnational organized crime. In Burkina Faso, a special counter-terrorism service is being

established. The senior security sector reform adviser deployed there by the United Nations and financed by the Peacebuilding Fund supported a needs assessment of the sector, promoted synergies between the defence and security forces and advocated the streamlining of rule of law and democratic governance procedures. On 24 October 2017, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel attended the opening of a three-day national security forum in Ouagadougou, organized with the support of UNOWAS and the United Nations country team, during which the key elements of a new national security policy were identified. The forum was preceded by regional consultations to ensure an inclusive and participatory process.

62. In addition to the limited capacity of the security sector in the countries of the Group, the many overlapping agreements in the region on police and judicial cooperation put in place by the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Group itself raise the question of which framework should form the legal basis for cross-border operations by the Joint Force.

63. The Peacebuilding Fund is implementing a cross-border project in the Liptako-Gourma area to complement operations by the security forces there. The project, with $3 million in funding, is aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism, including through socioeconomic activities for young people and women at risk, support for local conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, with a focus on farming conflicts, and the promotion of dialogue between the civilian population and the defence and security forces.

64. In Mali, MINUSMA and the United Nations country team are working to strengthen the rule of law by supporting the restoration and expansion of State authority throughout the country, including through the redeployment and activation of justice institutions. Such programmes contribute to creating mutually reinforcing environments for the Joint Force and MINUSMA, by strengthening the nexus between peace, development and security initiatives. The Mission's stabilization mandate specifically provides an opportunity for creating space to address the root causes of instability in the region, while security operations focus on the immediate manifestations of that instability: violent extremism, terrorism and transnational organized crime.

VI. Observations

65. I applaud the G-5 Sahel countries for their steadfast determination to make their vision succeed. I commend them for their continued efforts to mobilize and deploy their troops and for the conduct of the Joint Force's first two operations. I extend my gratitude to the international community, which has rallied together behind this important initiative and made such generous contributions to the Joint Force. Now, however, support must materialize in a more concrete and tangible manner.

66. In just one year, since the Peace and Security Council of the African Union authorized the deployment of the Joint Force, considerable progress has been made in mobilizing resources and support for it. This, however, has yet to translate into progress in making it fully operational. Significant challenges and obstacles remain. The security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate. The heinous terrorist attacks in Ouagadougou and, most recently, in Timbuktu and the continued assaults on local armed and security forces demonstrate that terrorist groups are attempting to gain influence and expand their presence. State authorities are increasingly absent in northern and central Mali and northern Burkina Faso. The international community must take timely action to reverse those trends.

67. Against that backdrop, the Joint Force is not being brought to fully operational capability at the required speed. I urge the G-5 Sahel countries to deploy their remaining troops as quickly as possible and to resolve command and control issues. Delays in the transfer of authority over their battalions to the Joint Force Commander are also slowing down the process. The States members of the Group must initiate the transfer of authority as a matter of urgency. Otherwise, operations will continue to be conducted on an ad hoc basis, and longer-term planning, including with regard to the end state of the Joint Force, will be difficult, if not impossible. I further call upon the Group to clarify and finalize the strategic concept of operations and the criteria and timelines for achieving the Joint Force's full operational capability. At the same time, I acknowledge that the Joint Force cannot be the sole response to the security challenges in the Sahel. I extend my gratitude to the troops serving in the Barkhane force and the men and women of MINUSMA, whose presence remains critical.

68. Coordination between the Joint Force, the Barkhane force, MINUSMA and liaison mechanisms needs to be boosted to ensure that each mission contributes effectively to creating an enabling environment for all. I welcome the deployment of liaison officers and the establishment of the coordination mechanisms, pursuant to resolution 2391 (2017) and the technical agreement. I urge States members of the Group and the Joint Force to be as forthcoming as possible about their needs for assistance and updates regarding deployment timelines.

69. Lasting peace and stability in the Sahel can be achieved only if underlying political, financial and governance deficiencies are addressed, State presence is restored and expanded across the region and the entire population, especially vulnerable communities and young people, are able to benefit from basic social services and employment opportunities.

70. The Joint Force therefore needs to be firmly embedded within a broader political and institutional framework that can guide its operations and ensure that it constitutes just one of many elements of a regional strategy. While I am encouraged by steps taken in recent weeks to strengthen the Group's permanent secretariat, reinforce links between the African Union and the Group and ensure that the Joint Force is an integral part of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture, I strongly urge the countries of the Group to accelerate the establishment of a support group (see para. 37).

71. I welcome the fruitful collaboration between the States members of the Group, the European Union and the African Union, which resulted in the signature of the technical agreement. The European Union has played a critical role in mobilizing donor support and in managing financial contributions to the Joint Force, including for the establishment of the human rights compliance framework, through its coordination hub. I also express gratitude to my Special Representative for Mali, Annadif Mahamat Saleh, and all MINUSMA colleagues, who have spared no effort to ensure that the Mission stands ready to provide support to the Joint Force, whenever it is requested, within the confines of resolution 2391 (2017) and the technical agreement. However, the Mission can effectively provide support, especially life-support and medical evacuations, only once the Joint Force resumes operations.

72. I am deeply concerned about the lack of funding available to the Mission for the provision of engineering support to better fortify the camps of the Joint Force. That funding shortage could further delay progress in bringing the Joint Force to its full operational capability. I therefore call upon donors and partners to urgently mobilize the remaining resources needed to provide this support effectively.

73. The Mission's support is critical. It will, however, be limited to the territory of Mali. I therefore urge international donors and partners to prioritize support for

Sectors East and West, where the lack of infrastructure and resources is a serious impediment to making the Joint Force fully operational. I also call upon donors to disburse the amounts pledged at the Brussels conference and earlier. Announcements must now be translated into action.

74. I remain convinced that United Nations support for the Joint Force through assessed contributions is the best means of ensuring sustainable and predictable long-term financing and support measures for the Joint Force. The current arrangements are neither sustainable nor commensurate with the challenges we face in the Sahel. Once again, I urge the members of the Security Council to be ambitious and provide the Joint Force with the strong mandate that would bestow upon it the political legitimacy it deserves and provide G-5 Sahel and the United Nations with the resources required to accelerate and finalize the process of making the Joint Force fully operational.

75. Until then, I urge the G-5 Sahel countries and the European Union to intensify their collaboration and joint needs mapping to ensure a maximum of transparency and to avoid overlap and the duplication of efforts in the mobilization of additional resources. I commend the Group for creating its own trust fund for the Joint Force, which could constitute a crucial instrument for mobilizing additional resources and donor support, including for lethal equipment. The United Nations stands ready to assist with the establishment of the trust fund. I would like to emphasize, however, the need to work closely with the European Union coordination hub and strongly recommend moving the hub to Nouakchott so that both organizations might intensify their collaboration and joint resource mobilization efforts. I also encourage the countries of the Group to assume full ownership of those efforts, including for their own trust fund, and to work more closely in that regard with international donors and partners, including the African Union and European Union. Last but not least, I urge international donors and partners to increase their support for the Group's permanent secretariat.

76. The upcoming elections in Mali, if prepared and carried out well, will be an opportunity to foster political dialogue, strengthen democratic institutions and lay the foundations for an inclusive Malian nation-State in which the concerns of minorities and vulnerable groups are adequately addressed. That would send a strong political message and serve as a concrete contribution to the prevention of the spread of violent extremism in the region. I call upon all signatories to the peace agreement in Mali to spare no effort in working together to facilitate the holding of peaceful, fair and transparent presidential elections. Beyond the elections, progress in the peace process remains crucial and will determine the success of any regional stabilization efforts. I urge the signatory parties to accelerate the implementation of key provisions of the peace agreement prior to the presidential elections, to demonstrate their commitment to the peace process and, more importantly, to deliver tangible peace dividends to the long-suffering population. I recall that, pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), any spoilers of the peace process may be subject to sanctions.